

EAGLE

LAKE

CAMPS

INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

SUMMER
2020



9 STEPS

TO DOING INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

1. PRAY

"But let him who boasts boast in this: that he understands and knows me." -Jeremiah 9:24

WHY START WITH PRAYER?

1. Allows us to come before the throne of God humbly and ready to listen.
Psalm 119:18
2. Reminds us of the relationship we have with God through Christ Jesus, which is why we're even studying His word in the first place - to KNOW Him. *Jeremiah 9:24; Jeremiah 29:13-14; John 15:7*

**DISCLAIMER: IF YOU THINK YOU ALREADY KNOW WHAT IT SAYS, YOU'VE PUT YOUR OWN SPIN ON IT!*

2. READ

Read the passage several times, ideally over several days, in at least 2 different translations.

READ 2 OR MORE TIMES

Allows you to really explore the passage and get a firm understanding of it as a whole, rather than just noticing parts that stand out to you.

READING OVER 2 OR MORE DAYS

Offers your heart and mind the chance to meditate on the passage, which makes room for the Spirit to bring light to the ways this passage can apply to your everyday life.

READING IN 2 OR MORE TRANSLATIONS

Provides a richer, more complete understanding of the passage since different versions vary in their approaches to translating the Bible. Try to read "opposite" translations (see chart below).



3. OBSERVE

REMAIN OBJECTIVE. Your goal is not to determine what is and is not significant. Your goal is to dig up as much as possible and allow the later processes to sift for gold.

NEED IDEAS FOR HOW TO START?

I noticed...

What happened right **before** this?

What happens right **after** this?

What's the **main topic**?

What **themes** can you find?

What words or phrases are **repeated**?

Who is the **audience**?

What is the **location**?

What **tone** is being used?

Is there a **question** being asked?

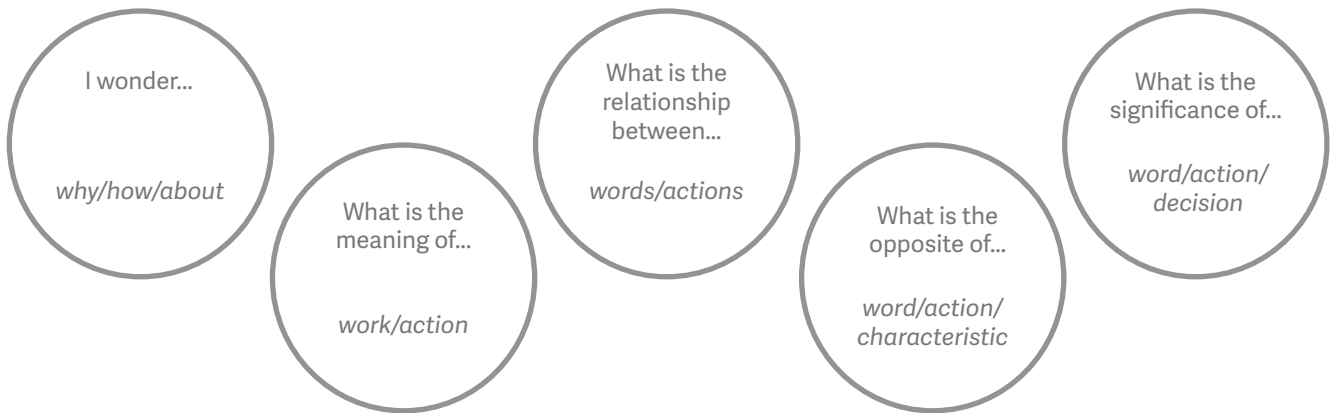
Is a question **answered**? How?

Are there any specific **events, people** or other Bible **verses** mentioned?

4. QUESTION

Ask questions about the passage that are open-ended; don't feel like you need to answer them.

Although it's usually most helpful to start with observations and then proceed to asking questions, it can be helpful (especially when starting passages you feel familiar with) to start with questions ahead of observations to challenge yourself and set a purpose for your time.



5. CONTEXT

Specific passages were written to people in a different time and culture than us. We must keep this in mind, otherwise we will read things into the passage that were never intended or miss important meaning.

Consider the author

Who is the author? What is his background? When did he write and for what purpose? What kind of relationship did he have with his audience?

Consider the Biblical audience and time

Who is the audience and what were their circumstances? How was their relationship with God? What was their relationship like with each other? What was happening at the time the book was written (culturally, politically, etc.)?

Consider Cross-References

Cross-reference across genres to uncover more about the person/events being discussed. Is there history from this event in another passage? Don't forget commentaries and the map in the back of your Bible can help!

Consider Genre

The Bible contains many different genres.
The Old Testament contains narrative, law, history, poetry, prophecy, and wisdom genres.
The New Testament contains gospels, history, parables, letters, and apocalyptic genres.

- 1 Identify the type of genre
- 2 Read the verses/chapters around the passage for a better understanding
- 3 Compare to other passages written in the same types of genre
- 4 Remember what genre you're reading as you make observations/ask questions/apply. For example, consider poetic devices when reading a psalm or remember narratives were written about people who may not be good examples to follow...

Consider the BIG picture

Ask yourself: "How does this passage fit in with the overarching redemptive plan of the whole Bible?"

6. CROSS REFERENCE

Where else does the Bible expand on, give an example of, or define your topic/passage?

Start by first using your memory, no tools. This will help you master your knowledge of the Bible as you search for people and places you know you've heard of before! **Next, use your Bible's cross-references.** These are generally found in the back of your Bible or in the margins. Many Bibles also include a concordance in the back. **Finally, use an online tool like blueletterbible.org** to search for passages you couldn't find on your own.

KEY WORDS	If "joy" is a key word in the verse, think about other places you've read the word "joy."
SIMILAR	If you're studying "faith", look also for "faithful", "belief", etc.
PARALLEL PASSAGES	For example: 1 Corinthians 13 is a famous passage on love, but Romans 12 gives a great description on love too.
CHARACTERS	Think about characters who do or do not exemplify aspects of the passage you've been reading. Someone who is joyful or obviously lacks joy; or someone who loves well or refuses to love. What can we learn about the topic based on their examples?
DESCRIPTIONS	Finally, think about descriptions you've read that might not use the exact word or phrase you're looking for, but still give a great description of what it means. Use the Bible to define the Bible!

7. WORD STUDY

STEPS TO DOING A WORD STUDY

- 1. Chose a key word in your verse or passage. To chose a key word: look for words that are repeated, words that start an important thought, or even words you don't fully understand!**
- 2. Look up the word in a Strong's Concordance book or use BlueLetterBible.org to find the original Hebrew/Greek word and its corresponding number.** For example: Both Job 5:16 and 1 Peter 1:3 use the word "hope" in each verse, but their Strong's number is different. In Job 5:16 "hope" is numbered H8615, while "hope" in 1 Peter 1:3 is numbered G1680. This means their definition/original meaning will be different.
- 3. Look up the word in an expository dictionary, such as Vine's. BlueLetterBible.org can help with this too. Expository definitions explain what the Bible means based on context.**
- 4. Determine its part of speech**
- 5. Use its Strong's number to find all other occurrences in the Bible. This is important because these will not be the same as English reoccurrences.** For example: at the end of John, Jesus twice asks Peter, "Do you agape me?" but Peter twice responds, "You know that I phileo you." We wouldn't get a correct understanding of "agape" if we thought Peter's "phileo-love" response was the same as Jesus' "agape-love" question.
- 6. Look up the verse in several other translations to see how each translates the word.**
- 7. Consider the following questions:**
 - Why does the translator choose to use this English word? (Hint: Use an English dictionary)
 - How does our culture understanding this word?
 - What is the biblical understanding of this word?
 - If asked to explain this word to a friend or camper, how would you do so?
 - How does fully understanding this word give a deeper understanding to the verse and overall passage?

8. COMMENTARY

Try your very best not to read any commentary until you've already done the bulk of your study. **We want to know how the Holy Spirit is speaking to YOU, not how he spoke to a commentator.**

The Bible is the **INSPIRED WORD OF GOD** and therefore living and active. Commentary, while illuminating, doesn't hold that same power. **YOU ROB YOURSELF OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN HOW TO FOLLOW THE SPIRIT'S PROMPTING AND INSTRUCTIONS WHEN YOU CAMP OUT IN SOMEONE ELSE'S THOUGHTS.**

Heads Up:
Many commentators disagree about difficult passages! Don't take anything other people say as Biblical truth; read several different commentaries and pray for the Spirit's wisdom and discernment as you search for answers. RELY ON THE SPIRIT.

That being said, commentary is **HELPFUL** when you feel stuck: when you are in the midst of a very difficult passage, when you don't know the passage's context, or when you are struggling to find an answer to a difficult question.

**For trustworthy commentary, we recommend biblehub.com or blueletterbible.com*

9. APPLICATION

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22). This is arguably the most important step. If you don't end your study understanding how it applies to your day to day life, you need to spend time in prayer and dive back in.

HOW TO MAKE EFFECTIVE APPLICATIONS:

1. Inductive Bible study means that we take all these little pieces that we've gathered to create one whole, cohesive meaning.
3. Don't twist verses or findings to support a theory you have that is not clearly taught. Looking over all you've discovered in your Bible study, how would you begin to answer your questions?
4. Reflecting on these, how does this passage fit into the overarching redemptive plan of God (the Gospel)? **What does it reveal about God's character?**
5. And although you don't want to take an egocentric approach, do remember to humbly ask the Lord if there is something He wishes to reveal about YOUR character or identity in Him in this passage. Pray through the SPECK acronym to the right. Is there a....

- S** **SIN FOR YOU TO CONFESS OR AVOID?**
- P** **PROMISE TO CLAIM?**
- E** **EXAMPLE FOR YOU TO FOLLOW? (OR NOT FOLLOW)?**
- C** **COMMAND TO OBEY?**
- K** **KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER TO EMBRACE OR CORRECT?**

OVERVIEW OF THE

GENESIS

ADAM & EVE

The first man and woman; they were kicked out of the Garden of Eden after choosing to disobey God by eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil.

Chapters: 2-3

CAIN & ABEL

Adam and Eve's sons; Cain kills Abel in jealousy.

Chapter 4

NOAH

Noah, ten generations removed from Adam, built the Ark and survived the flood with his family.

Chapter: 5

ABRAHAM

Ten generations from Noah. God promises to make Abraham's descendants as numerous as the stars and give them Canaan aka Israel.

Chapter: 12:1-8

10 COMMANDMENTS

God gives the Israelites (via Moses) the 10 Commandments on Mount Sinai and sets apart the tribe of Levi as the priests for the people, along with establishing other laws. (*Exodus 16-Leviticus-Numbers 1-13*)

40 YEARS IN THE DESERT

God brings the Israelites to Canaan (aka Israel); Moses sends in 12 spies; they say the land is full of giants and impossible to conquer (except Caleb and Joshua-they want to trust God and take the land); the people rebel and refuse to enter; they are condemned to wander the desert 40 years; only Caleb and Joshua live to enter 40 years later.

1 KINGS

SOLOMON

God grants Solomon wisdom and he becomes the wisest man on earth. He is the one who builds the Temple. However, he does not walk with God or lead his sons or people in godliness.

Chapters: 1-11

THE KINGDOM SPLITS

Solomon's son Rehoboam rules foolishly, and the kingdom divides into **Israel**, (consisting of the 10 northern tribes' territories and ruled by Jeroboam, a former servant of Solomon's), and **Judah**, (consisting of the two southern tribes: Judah & Benjamin).

Chapters: 11-14

ELIJAH

After the Kingdom splits, Judah is led by both godly and ungodly kings, whereas Israel is led entirely by ungodly kings. Elijah served in Israel under the reign of Ahab, six kings removed from Jeroboam Ahab - along with his wife Jezabel - was arguably the wickedest leader of Israel.

Chapters: 1 Kings 17-19

Add more from your study:

THE EXILE AND THE RETURN

Eventually God fulfills His promise to exile the Israelites for disobeying Him, and allows Assyria to conquer Israel and then a few decades later He allows Babylon to conquer both Assyria and Judah. (e.g. the stories of Daniel and Esther and the prophetic books of Isaiah and Jeremiah.) After 70 years, God moves the King's heart to let the Israelites return to rebuild the temple with Ezra.

OLD TESTAMENT

▶ EXODUS

JACOB

Abraham has sons Ishmael & Isaac; Isaac has Esau & Jacob; Jacob is renamed Israel and has 12 sons (including Joseph) who eventually become the 12 Tribes of Israel.

Chapters: 21, 25, 29-30

JOSEPH

Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery; Joseph eventually works his way up to right-hand man to the Pharaoh, which enables him to save his family from severe famine by bringing them to Egypt.

Chapters: 37, 39-50

MOSES

The Israelites greatly expand in number in Egypt and are eventually enslaved; God raises up Moses to free his people (aka the 10 plagues) and lead them back to the Promised Land.

Chapters: 1-15

JUDGES ▶

THE TIME OF THE JUDGES

After Joshua's death, Israel was led by various judges - including Deborah, Gideon, and Samson (Ruth also lived during this time) - with the intention that God was the true King.

However, during this time, "everyone did as he saw fit"; the Israelites often wandered from God.

Chapters: All of Judges

1&2 SAMUEL ▶

SAMUEL/SAUL

The Lord raises up Samuel at the end of the time of the judges. The Israelites reject God's kingship and ask for (demand) a king like the other nations have. Following the Lord's guidance, Samuel anoints Saul (tribe of Benjamin). Later, after the Lord rejects Saul, Samuel anoints David (tribe of Judah).

Chapters: 1 Samuel 1-10, 16

DAVID

David greatly expands the kingdom but commits several serious sins: He commits adultery with Bathsheba, murders her husband, marries her, repents, and eventually fathers Solomon with her.

Chapters: All of 1 & 2 Samuel

▶ NEHEMIAH ▶

NEHEMIAH

Around the time Ezra returns to rebuild the temple, Nehemiah (very bravely) requests and then is granted permission to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall around it.

Chapters: All of Nehemiah

Add more from your study:

PROPHETS

Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi prophesy around this time; their books end the Old Testament. Approximately 400 years of silence pass, and then begin the events that start Matthew and Luke.

This is by no means a complete list; several big and important things during this time are entirely left out. The goal of this chart is to help you understand the major events leading up to the stories of Elijah (week 7) and Nehemiah (week 4). If you have never read the Old Testament before, we encourage you to take the time to read it!

FIRST WEEK

Abiding: Foundations

New Staff: Chapter Study

Returners: Topical Study

John 15

Read the passage & take notes!

VERSE 1-4

ANCHOR QUESTION

Is it possible to follow Christ without abiding in Him?

VERSE 5-7

NEW TOOL **ABCD Method**

This is just one method to help you organize your thoughts and is particularly helpful if you've never done Bible study before, but also is an easy method to apply to any passage of scripture time after time! Try it out on the next page.

VERSE 8-11

VERSE 12-17

A: A title

After reading through this passage, what title would you give it?

Why?

B: Best Verse

What in your opinion is the best verse in this passage? Which verse is encouraging you or reminding you of a truth or promise you needed to hear?

Why?

C: Challenge Verse

What verse in this passage is challenging you in some way? (Think of this as your application verse - how is the Lord challenging you to live out what He's teaching in His Word?)

Why?

D: Difficult Verse

What verse is hard for you to understand or accept as Truth, or which do you want to study more in depth? Why? (Remember, it's okay to ask hard questions!) How could you study it further?

Why?

Notes



Dig Deeper

1 Bearing fruit is a key concept in the passage. What does it mean to bear fruit? Where else does it talk about bearing fruit in the New Testament? If we are not bearing fruit, are we abiding?

2 The metaphor of a vineyard/God as a vinedresser occurs over and over throughout the Bible. Use cross-references to further explore this metaphor. How does better understanding this metaphor give you insight into John 15 and/or God's character?

3 We are given a very clear command to love others. What does that command mean? Consider doing a word study on the word love or exploring where else the Bible explains what this word means. (Hint: Start in 1 Corinthians. 13.)

SECOND WEEK

Abiding through Prayer
Chapter Study
Matthew 6:9-13

ANCHOR QUESTION

Is prayer an essential ingredient to abiding (you can't abide without prayer), or more of a happy byproduct of abiding (prayer flows out of abiding in Christ)?

Read the passage & take notes!

VERSE 9

VERSE 10

VERSE 11

NEW TOOL Observation

Take the time to read each phrase in the passage individually. After you read a phrase, pause and ask yourself:

1. How is this an important detail?

2. What does it reveal to me about Jesus' character/what He values?

3. What does it reveal to me about God's heart/desires for me?

4. What does it tell me about Jesus' heart for His Body?

VERSE 12

VERSE 13

What is context? It's placing the verse or passage you are studying within the bigger picture of the Bible, and it's the most important tool you have to protect yourself from misapplying the Bible. We discover context by asking questions about how what we're reading fits in with what's around it.

1 Immediate Context

What do the verses directly before and after the passage say? What do they reveal about audience/conflict/setting?

2 The Book

Do other passages in the book expand on the main point of your passage?

3 Parallel

-other books by the same author

-the same story told by different authors

-similar styles
 (e.g. if you're studying a prayer, what other prayers can you find in the Bible and how are they similar or different?)

4 Historical Context

We'll get more into this Week 4, but for now, if special emphasis is placed on a word (name, place, etc), take time to read about it in your Study Bible or on Blue Letter Bible.

Turn to Week 4 if you want more information.

5 All of Scripture

Is what you're finding consistent with the rest of Scripture? Scripture will never contradict Scripture. Everything eventually reveals God's overarching redemption plan.

Try it with Matthew 6:9-13

1 Immediate Context

Read 6:5-15 carefully, considering how these verses bring deeper understanding to exactly what it is Jesus is commanding us to pray.

(e.g. How does praying v. 9-13 prevent you from being 'like the hypocrites' mentioned in v. 5? Or how does it give you a correct understanding of 'the reward,' also mentioned in v. 5? Would anything added to v. 9-13 be considered an 'empty phrase,' mentioned in v. 7? How do v. 14-15 give deeper meaning to what we pray in v. 12?)

2 The Book

The Lord's Prayer is right in the middle of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Read through the entire Sermon (chapters 5-7) and note what common themes keep popping up in each section.

What does Jesus value most in His Kingdom and followers? How does this help you better understand 6:9-13? (Consider also reading the stories that immediately precede and follow The Sermon for even greater insight. Why would Jesus decide to give a revolutionary sermon [see note in Historical Context section] just as his fame was beginning to grow? How does this help us better understand His passion for simple, straightforward prayer?)

3 Parallel

Consider how Luke shares The Lord's Prayer in Luke 11:1-13. (Also consider reading the stories immediately preceding and following the passage for further insight, as well.)

How does this slightly different retelling help you better understand God's heart for communication with us?
Hint: Think about the reward talked about in Matthew 6:6 and what the Father then gives in Luke 11:13.

4 Historical Context

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount was revolutionary for its time, and contradictory to how most teachers interpreted the Law. The Systematic Theology Study Bible says, "We misunderstand the Sermon on the Mount if we think Jesus is contradicting the Old Testament. He makes it plain this is not the case... (in 5:17). When Jesus says, 'But I say to you,' he means not 'in contradiction to the Old Testament' but 'in contradiction to the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees.'"

Take time to think through how 6:9-13 could be considered revolutionary or contradictory for its time. (Read Luke 18:9-14 for help.)

5 All of Scripture

Look for other prayers in the Bible! Do they follow this same pattern? If not, are there any elements (e.g. praise, requests) that are always mentioned in prayers? If so, what are they? Why do you think they're always included? And do you incorporate those into your prayers?

 **TOOL BUILDING:**
 CROSS REFERENCING:

If you don't know how to look for other places with similar elements, start at the beginning of the New Testament and flip through, looking for subheadings that mention what you're looking for (e.g. "prayer"). Or turn to the back of your study Bible and refer to its concordance or index.



Dig Deeper

Suggested References/Notes:

1 Forgiveness is a big emphasis in this passage. Take time to do a word study on forgiveness, as well as debt. *What does forgiveness mean? What does it entail? What does it lead to? Why are prayer and forgiveness so closely interwoven here?*

2 The emphasis surrounding The Lord's Prayer in Matthew is forgiveness, whereas the emphasis on The Lord's Prayer in Luke is more about persistence. *Why is this? Why is persistence important in prayer? Is there a connection between forgiveness and persistence? Is one more important to another in your own prayer life?*

3 "The Kingdom" is one of those phrases that's mentioned so frequently throughout the New Testament, and especially the Gospels, that it's easy to feel as though you know exactly what it means. But do you? Could you in one sentence articulate what The Kingdom is? If not (and even if you think you can!), it's worth it to take time to do a quick mini-study on The Kingdom, starting with cross-references from The Gospels. Go ahead and use the questions to the right to help!

4 What is the will of God and how do you know it? Take time to study this phrase, and then consider: how do you obey the will of God even when you don't like it? Hint: Start with Romans 12:1-3.

THE KINGDOM

Who is it?

Where is it?

Who is in it?

What are its laws?

What are its values?

Why is it being established?

Is it the same thing/place as Heaven?

THIRD WEEK

Abiding in Obedience Chapter Study Philippians 2:1-18

Read the passage & take notes!

VERSE 1-4

ANCHOR QUESTION

Which has to happen first: abiding or obedience?

VERSE 5-11

NEW TOOL Passage Layout

VERSE 12-13

Try this: write out the entire passage in your notebook, skipping 1-2 lines each time and leaving plenty of margin space so there is room to write in notes. Now go through, writing your notes all over the passage! Hint: try color coordinating so it's easier to go back and read later. (e.g. Make all of your observations red, all of your word studies blue, all of your cross-references green, and all your questions yellow, etc.)

VERSE 14-18

Study Guide: Word Study

Word studies help us understand the true meaning of a word. Below are two word studies we have started. Refer to Step 7 from the 9 Steps to Inductive Bible Study.

Encouragement

Definitions

From Strong's 3874: paraklesis (noun) – a calling near; a summons; supplication; admonition; comfort³

Vine's 3874: "a calling to one's aid" (para: "by the side"; kaleo: "to call"), then "an exhortation, encouragement". Translated: "consolation", "encouragement", "comfort", "exhortation"⁴

Notes:

Cross References

Romans 15:15- Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus.

Notes:

Thoughts:

I thought encouragement was mostly someone giving me a pep talk and making me feel good. But being encouraged from being united with Christ is understanding more fully that I am called to His side and embracing the confidence and assurance that gives me.

Notes:

Selfish Ambition

Definitions

From Strong's 2052: eritheia (noun) – intrigue; by implication, faction; contention; courting distinction⁵

Vine's 2052: denotes ambition; self-seeking; rivalry; self-will being an underlying idea, hence it denotes party-making. It is derived not from eris ("strife") but from erithos ("hireling"), hence the meaning is "seeking to win followers" or "factions" -factions: fruit of jealousy.⁶

Notes:

Cross References

Galatians: 5:20, 2 Corinthians: 12:20 –Included both times in a list of "sins of the flesh" – equivalent to envy, jealousy, slander, arrogance.

Notes:

Thoughts:

This is not merely "caring only for oneself" as in the English definition of the word. Rather, it's me trying to get people to my side. How often do I tell a good friend the story of how someone hurts me, but my story isn't completely objective; I'm trying to get that friend on "my side" and opposed to the one who hurt me? How often are my words meant to paint myself in a better light while putting someone else down? (1 Corinthians. 13:7 – Love always protects.)

Notes:

Notes:



Dig Deeper

1 When studying a chapter, it's always helpful to get context. The author of Philippians, Paul, is another excellent example of obedience. Take time to **read** through Philippians (especially chapter 3) to look for how Paul practiced obedience.

2 Write down each individual command Paul gives us in v. 1-18. Carefully consider the cost and reward of each command.

Based on this passage, what does a mature believer in the Body look like?

How is obedience (and its cost and reward) highlighted in this passage?

How are abiding and obedience connected?

3 Consider these statements: "Obedience to Christ is most often tested in our relationships with others," and "Our relationships with others are the most powerful barometer we have to know if we are walking with Jesus and like Jesus." Do you agree or disagree? Can you think of examples in your life where you've seen this? Then pray through this question: "Can I really call myself an obedient follower of Jesus if I'm unwilling to live as much as it is up to me in peace and harmony with those I don't like?"

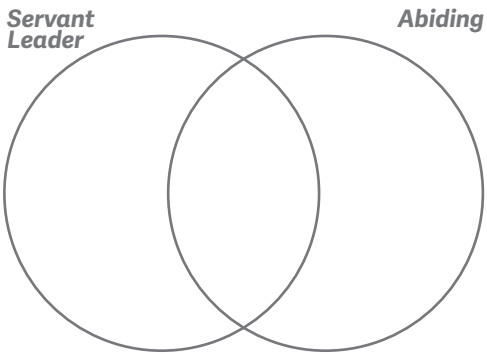
FOURTH WEEK

Abiding through:
Servant Leadership
Character Study
Nehemiah
1-7



ANCHOR QUESTION

How are the characteristics of a servant leader and the characteristics of someone who abides similar?...Different? Consider using a venn diagram like the one below to help you organize your thoughts.



NEW TOOL Studying Long Passages

One way to help yourself keep track of what you're studying is to determine the main idea in each smaller section. Below, determine the main thing you learn about Nehemiah's character in each chapter.

CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER 5

CHAPTER 6

CHAPTER 7



NEW TOOL Historical Context

Finding historical context is essential to doing a good character study so that you understand why a character believes and acts the ways he does! However, it can be time consuming. We thought it would be most helpful to give you some of the most important highlights in Nehemiah's historical context so you can focus on studying Nehemiah's character. The chart on the next page gives you this historical context. Feel free to keep exploring on your own.



Biblical Passage	Event <i>(*There is controversy over all these Mede and Persian kings so take this timeline with a grain of salt! See below.)</i>
2 Kings 17:24-41	Assyrians conquer Israel and carry the people into exile. Soon after, Babylon conquers Assyria.
2 Kings 17:26-34	Babylonian colonists take the place of exiled Israelites and marry with the remaining Jewish poor, eventually resulting in the Samaritan race.
2 Kings 25:8-17 Jeremiah: 52:24-30	The Babylonians conquer Judah (which includes destroying the Temple in and the wall around Jerusalem) and carry off the people in several waves. Daniel is carried off to serve Nebuchadnezzar in one of these waves.
Daniel 5-6	Cyrus the Great (a Medean-Persian king) overthrows Babylon. Daniel becomes his advisor.
Ezra 1	Cyrus (probably Cyrus the Great from Daniel) decrees that the Jews can return to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple. Zerubbabel leads the first wave home in 538 BC.
Ezra 4:24	Artaxerxes** ordered building on the temple to cease. (See below)
Haggai Zechariah Ezra 6:1	These prophets preach to the exiles who returned under Zerubbabel.
Nehemiah 1	In the month of Chislev (November/December), Nehemiah hears from Hanani about the trouble in Jerusalem (probably in relation to Artaxerxes' order) and begins praying over the problem of the broken wall.
Nehemiah 2	In the month of Nisan (March/April) Nehemiah speaks to Artaxerxes and Artaxerxes commissions Nehemiah to rebuild the wall. Nehemiah starts the wall in July, finishes it in September, then returns to Artaxerxes. Artaxerxes promptly sends Nehemiah back to serve as governor in Jerusalem for twelve years. (He then goes home to Persia and returns to Jerusalem for a second term about ten years later.)
Malachi	Malachi prophesies sometime during this window around or after Nehemiah's governorship.
Ezra 7	Ezra leads the second wave of exiles home. Some argue this occurred 13 years before Nehemiah returned; others argue this happened after Nehemiah rebuilt the wall, possibly decades later.

***Mede and Persian Kings:** The confusion comes from a disagreement over which Medean/Persian king is which since Alexander the Great's army destroyed most Persian records when he conquered Persia. This problem is compounded by the fact that Artaxerxes is actually a title, not a name, which Greek and Roman historians seemed not to understand. **The most important thing to note is that regardless of when Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi took their place in rebuilding Jerusalem, they all had the same purpose: honor God's law and glorify Him by rebuilding His Holy City.**

****This Artaxerxes (king) is most likely one of the following three possibilities:**

1. Darius Hystaspes, who was married to Cyrus the Great's daughter Atossa. Atossa would've probably been familiar with Daniel and her father's esteem for the God of the Jews. They were Xerxes' parents.

2. Xerxes himself (from Esther). This would mean the Queen mentioned in Nehemiah 2 is Esther or Vashti.

3. Ahasuerus, who was probably the son of Xerxes and Vashti and was also, therefore, Esther's step-son.



To start a character study, simply ask yourself the following questions as you read through your passage. (Hint: read through the entire book of Nehemiah to get a feel for the story, even if you've read it before! Then read through a second time, looking for answers to the below questions.)

WHO IS THIS CHARACTER?

How does he see himself?

What does he believe about God?

How does he see the people around him?

How do others view him?

What does he value?

How does he handle conflict?

How does he handle his responsibilities?

Does he change over time? If so, what causes this change? Is it for the better?

Does he leave a legacy?

What is it?

If you could use only 1-2 adjectives to describe him, what would they be?

WHAT DOES HE DO?

What choices does he make? (Does he seek advice? Pray? Act rashly? Base his actions on emotions?)

How does he handle adversity?

How does he handle his sin? (Does he repent? Does he justify his actions? etc.)

Does he act in a way aligned with the law? (The letter of the law, the spirit of the law, both, neither?)

How does he behave?

What are his motives? (Is he trying to glorify God or self?)

Who do his actions impact? Does he care?

HOW DOES HE USE WORDS?

How does he use words?

Does he speak the truth? Half-truths?

Are his words for self-promotion or to honor God or something else?

Does he leave anything unsaid?



Dig Deeper

Notes:

1 *Why is it so important that the wall be rebuilt?*
Look for cross-references and commentaries that explain the historical context for this.

Then, consider that God rarely does something in the physical world that doesn't have a corresponding spiritual element or metaphor attached. **For the wall, ask yourself:** *Am I courageous enough to walk around the walls of my heart to see where they are broken down and not guarding my inner temple?*

Am I broken hearted when I see the wreckage sin has left on the walls that should be guarding my heart?

Or, conversely, have I built walls to self-protect even when God is calling me into something hard or different? (Consider Psalm 127:1; Proverbs 25:28, 4:23, 18:10; Isaiah 22:9-11; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6.)

2 Most of chapter 1 records Nehemiah's prayer. This prayer provides clues to his relationship with God. **Take time to study his prayer:** *does it parallel The Lord's Prayer? If so, how? How does it differ?*

How does it reveal what Nehemiah believes about God and how God sees his people?

Then, consider: Nehemiah prays consistently throughout the book, which almost always leads to an action. **Create a chart** to record every prayer and every action he takes, and then **consider:** *how are prayer and action interwoven?*

Where does wait-time come in, if at all?

3 He repeatedly cries out to God, "Remember me!" *What do you think he means here? Why is it significant that he asks this only of God? (Consider 1 Peter 2:23.)*

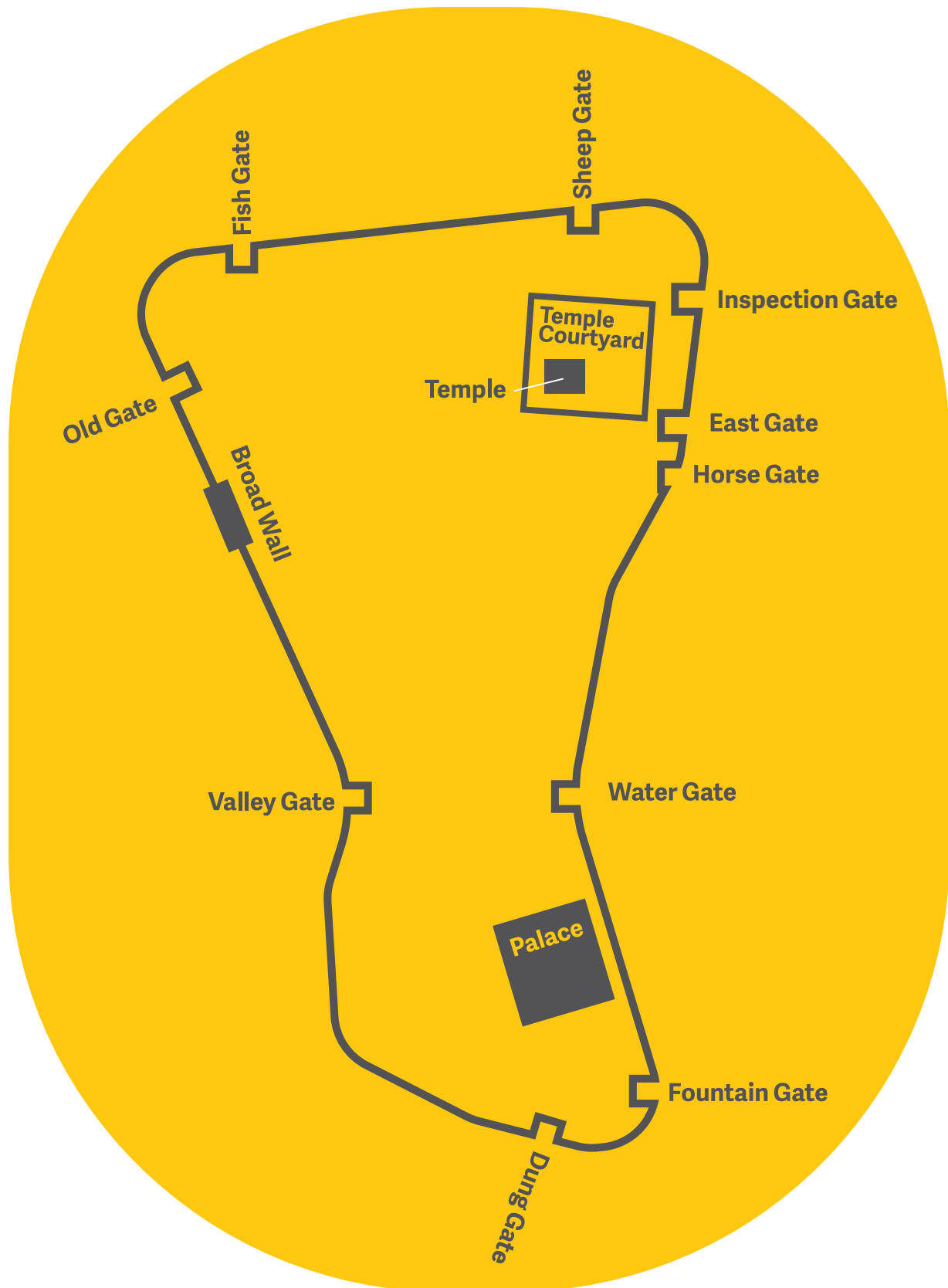
Nehemiah also continually urges the people to remember God. *Why is this? Why is remembrance an important aspect to abiding?*

(We'll dig more into this topic the last week of study, but take time to think about it now! *What parts of your story do you need to remember to help you accurately see God's character?*)

4 Are you a visual or hands-on learner? Try this! Turn to next page where you will find a map of Nehemiah's wall around Jerusalem. Then, read through Nehemiah carefully, mapping where each person worked on the wall.

MAP: Nehemiah's Wall Around Jerusalem

Go back and read Dig Deeper #4! Then write down where each person worked on the wall! Imagine how people would interact with each other while building. Imagine what it would be like to work on this wall. What is it made of? Why is it important?!



FIFTH WEEK

Making the Choice to Abide Chapter Study Psalm 16

ANCHOR QUESTION

How does abiding require making regular, active choices? What types of choices do you need to make to abide well?



NEW TOOL Verse Analysis

The overall objective of this week's study is to explore what choices we have to make in order to abide. Look carefully at Psalm 16: David makes a clear choice in each verse.

Take time to explore each verse:

Are there any words you want to do a word study on?

Any cross-references that come to mind?

Any context you need to figure out? (e.g. what's a 'drink offering'?)

Now, think through each of the eleven choices he deliberately makes (one choice/verse):
Why does he make this choice?

- | | | | |
|----|-----|-----|----|
| 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. | 7. | 8. |
| 9. | 10. | 11. | |

What does life with God look like when he makes this choice?

What are the consequences of not making this choice?

Rephrase each verse in your own words. Consider using this format: start with the choice he makes ("I choose...") followed by the reason he makes it ("because"), and use any other information you found in your word studies, cross-references, etc. to build out your paraphrase.

- | | |
|-----|-----|
| 1. | 2. |
| 3. | 4. |
| 5. | 6. |
| 7. | 8. |
| 9. | 10. |
| 11. | |

Finally, think through how this expands your understanding of the passage. Then, think through where you are in your faith.

Do you need to make any choices like David?

What other areas do you need to make choices in?

Study Guide: Tips & Tricks to Studying a Psalm

1

Make observations to establish what type of Psalm you are reading.

There are two main types of Psalms: Personal Psalms, which are between the psalmist and God, and Corporate Worship Psalms, which are written for many people to sing together in praise.

Look for context clues:

Many psalms start with a subscript (a note just under the chapter number, before the first verse) providing context. (*Who wrote it? Why?*)

Look for signals:

Is the psalm mostly making statements which establish a personal prayer? Or telling others what to do/think which establish corporate worship?

2

Why is this important?

Personal Psalms reveal that it is acceptable before God to pour out our hearts to Him (Psalm 60:2), honestly communicating to Him what we're thinking and feeling. We need to read them with Jesus' message of love and grace even towards enemies in the forefront of our minds.

Corporate Worship Psalms were written to be prayed and sung! They do a much better job of communicating universal truths about God's love and grace, and are excellent for copying.

3

Ask questions to dig in.

What does the psalmist believe about God? What does the psalmist believe about himself? What does the psalmist specifically ask of God?

Try to find something for each verse or phrase. For example, when the psalmist says "I said to the Lord" (Ps. 16:2), he believes that he can talk to God and that God will listen. It could further reveal that he believes God is good and desires relationship with him because he also believes that God wants to listen to what he has to say.

Look for statements that start with "I/me/my."

Next consider, *what does his request reveal about what he desires? What does it reveal that he believes about God? Does he record any ways that God answers?*

These answers often provide the basis for a psalmist's praise, and can provide a basis for our praise, too, as we consider how God has similarly answered our own prayers.

4

Look for poetic devices.

Are there any repeated words (or their synonyms)? (This is called repetition.) Finding these helps you discern the main theme or purpose of the psalm.

Are there any places where one thing is compared to or described in terms of another? (This is called metaphor or simile.) Recognizing and exploring these helps us better understand what the psalmist means and how he sees a person or topic.

Are there any places where something gets human characteristics? (This is called anthropomorphism.) Identifying these places allows us to recognize when the psalmist is making a particular point. These are important to identify when they're used to describe God. **Just as Christ lowered Himself by coming to earth in the form of a man to meet us where we're at, so too does God allow Biblical authors to use human terms to describe Him so that we can have some understanding of His character.**

However, we must remember that God is not a man (Numbers 23:19); He is so much more. Taking time to recognize anthropomorphism helps us identify His kindness in making Himself relatable to us while also allowing us to step back to acknowledge His vast greatness and superiority in humble worship (Isaiah 55:8-9). Identifying anthropomorphism allows us to read phrases like "the Lord regretted" and still understand them in light of His total sovereignty, omniscience, and omnipresence. (Just because He regretted something doesn't mean He didn't know it was coming and couldn't have prevented it.)

Notes:



Dig Deeper

1 In verse 2, David says, “apart from you I have no good thing.” This concept of what is “good” occurs frequently throughout the Bible. (Consider Mark 10:17-18.) **Take time to explore** what the Bible says is “good.” *How do we discern for ourselves what is good, so we can obey Paul’s command in Philippians 4:8 to dwell on what is good?*

2 In Acts 2:22-33 and 13:32-39, Peter and Paul both quote this psalm to explain the resurrection and freedom from sin. Even though pretty much every Christian knows about Jesus’ resurrection and their promised life in Heaven after death, very few have taken the time to study what the New Testament says about this great privilege and its accompanying responsibilities. **Take time to explore** this topic for yourself!

3 CHALLENGE: in v. 7, David says, “in the night also my heart instructs me.” Jim Downing talks about how this is something we can replicate in his book *Meditation*.

Here’s how: start reading scripture (Downing recommends the Psalms) as you go to bed. When a phrase pops out to you, repeat it over and over to yourself as you drift off. You will find that your brain continues to think about it all night long! We challenge you to try this every night this week and share how it went with your Bible study!

SIXTH WEEK

Abiding in Perseverance

Chapter Study

Romans 8

ANCHOR QUESTION

To abide well, is it enough to understand our identity in Christ or do we have to fully embrace it, also? -OR- What is hope and how does it help us abide faithfully?

NEW TOOL

Identify main and supporting ideas

To help yourself discover this, think:

What are the words/phrases that are repeated over and over?

Is there an idea that the author keeps going back to?

Do all the details or verses in the passage seem to support one key idea or verse?

On the right, we've identified three main ideas in the chapter for you! Read through the passage carefully and write down any words, phrases, or verses that help you understand the main ideas.

BONUS: Think through other places in the Bible where these main ideas occur. Find cross-references to expand your understanding of these main ideas.

The following are main ideas in the passage. Find verses in Romans 8 that build out these main ideas.

1. Being in Christ means receiving the Spirit of freedom and sonship.

2. Hope helps us persevere.

3. God is a good Father.



NEW TOOL

Studying Complex Passages

Some passages in the Bible are much more complex than others, which can make them hard to study. Romans 8 definitely falls into this category! Some things to keep in mind when studying a difficult passage:

DON'T feel like you need to fully understand the theology presented in the chapter! Theologians have spent countless years digging into these passages and debating their meanings. There are some things that we'll simply never fully understand because our God is so great and far above us! Let yourself be okay with that.

DO remember that the Spirit of the Living God is living in you. He is not only able but excited to teach you using the Bible. The NIV Study Bible says, "The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit does not involve revelation of new truth or the explanation of all difficult passages of Scripture to our satisfaction. Rather, it is the development of the capacity to appreciate and appropriate God's truth already revealed -- making the Bible meaningful in thought and daily living."

How do you start studying a complex passage?

TRY IT!

1 Read in several translations. We highly recommend reading from The Message and/or The New Living Translation!

1

2 Make a list of complex truths or ideas that are hard for you to understand. Brainstorm 2-3 questions that come up from this list. Prayerfully set these aside for now.

2

3 Make a list of clear, simple truths God is revealing to you in this passage. Use these for the majority of your study. (Try them with the cross-reference activity in the next section!)

3

4 Ask yourself: How do these help me appreciate who God is and the identity He has given me?

4

5 At the end of your time, look through what you have learned about the clear truths God has revealed to you. *Do any of them apply to the questions you asked?* (We've found that while our questions are not usually answered directly, after time studying the Word, God has revealed to us in some way answers to our questions with truth about who He is or who we are in Him!) Over time, as you grow in spiritual maturity through continued time in the Word, prayer, fellowship, and abiding in Christ, you'll discover that many of those complex truths and ideas become simpler for you to understand!

5

BONUS:

One final strategy we find helpful in approaching complex passages is choosing a lens through which to study it. **We suggest the lens of hope.**

Try this:

Read the following quote: "The four conditions of hope [according to Aquinas] are that it **regards something good** in the **future** that is **difficult** but **possible to obtain**" (from *On Reading Well* by Karen Swallow Prior).⁷

How do we see the conditions of hope play out in Romans 8? For example: What is good in Romans 8? What will happen in the future? Why is it difficult to obtain? How do we know that it is possible to obtain?



Dig Deeper

Notes:

1 The Message titles chapter 8, “The Solution is Life on God’s Terms.”⁸ Take time to put chapter 8 in context: Read through chapters 6 and 7 to figure out the problem to which chapter 8 is “the solution.”

Read through chapter 8 carefully. What is “the solution” Paul offers?

Read through chapters 9-14 to figure out what life looks like on God’s terms. How are we motivated to live, having received salvation?

2 Consider The Message’s translation of 8:15-16: “The resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave tending life. It’s adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike, ‘What’s next, Papa?’ God’s spirit touches our spirit and confirms who we really are. We know who He is, and we know who we are: Father and children.”⁹

On the resurrection life:

How do you view your Christian walk: a timid, grave tending life or adventurously expectant? Why?

Consider this quote from *A Severe Mercy* by Sheldon Vanauken: “The best argument for Christianity is Christians: their joy, their certainty, their completeness. But the strongest argument against Christianity is also Christians – when they are somber and joyless, when they are self-righteous and smug in complacent consecration, when they are narrow and repressive, then Christianity dies a thousand deaths.”¹⁰ *Do you agree or disagree? Why?*

On the Father and His Child:

Can you confidently say you know who the Father is? (Hint: Search through Romans 8 to look for any descriptors you can find of God, and then consider what these tell you about His character. [e.g. He’s present, which tells us He wants to be close to us and involved in our lives, and is ready for us to turn to Him at any moment.] Then use cross-references to expand your list!)

Can you confidently say who you are as His child? (Hint: Search through Romans 8 to look for any descriptors you can find of who we are, and then consider what that tells us about ourselves. [e.g. We still experience the limitation of sin, which means we’re going to fail at some point, but we are also His children, which means He’ll never reject us. Then use cross-references to expand your list!])

Which descriptors of God do you struggle to believe? Why?

Which descriptors of your identity do you struggle to believe? Why?

Do you agree with 1 John 3:1 that being called His child is God’s way of lavishly bestowing His love on us?

Does knowing He is our Father make you feel loved and safe? Why or why not?

SEVENTH WEEK

Abiding in Hardship
Character Study
1 Kings 19

ANCHOR QUESTION

Does experiencing hardship mean we've failed to abide well?



TRY IT!
Historical Context

1. **Deuteronomy 11:16-17** (the law Moses gave to the Israelites upon entering the Promised Land)

2. **1 Kings 17-18**

3. **Luke 4:24-27**

4. **Romans 11:1-6**

5. **Matthew 17:1-3**

6. **James 5:7-20**



Tool Building
Historical Context

Remember that finding historical context is so important to good character studies! We're again helping you out with finding important historical details for understanding Elijah by recommending cross-references. Take time to look each up to help you understand the backstory!

7. **Malachi 4:1-6; Matthew 11:1-15**

8. **Matthew 27:45-49; Matthew 16:13-14** (How the Israelites **still** think of Elijah hundreds of years after his death)

Don't forget to refer to the Old Testament Timeline at the front of the study to figure out where Elijah fits in!



The nature of the world is that it is fallen -- but will be created anew. Because it is fallen, the world is filled with people who are fallen -- but who have the possibility of redemption. Nevertheless, pain, suffering, wrongdoing, and injustice are, because of this fallenness, inevitable. Failure to recognize either the current condition of the world or the promise of its future will lead to either of the vices that patience moderates: wrath owing to an unwillingness to accept this reality of the world or dispiritedness that is a form of withdrawal from this reality. . . . Recognizing the true character of the world requires recognition of the God who made it and his character. . . . N.T. Wright says about the virtue of patience: 'Those who believe in God and the creator and in the eventual triumph of his good purposes for the world will not be in a hurry to grasp at quick fix solutions in their own life or in their vocation and mission. . . .' Augustine describes patience as the virtue by which 'we tolerate evil things with an even mind.' The patient person, he continues, chooses to bear evil rather than to commit further evil in response to it. Patience keeps us from yielding to the evils that are 'temporal and brief' and from losing 'those good things which are great and eternal.' No wonder patience is traditionally understood to be a subvirtue of courage.



*-Karen Swallow Prior
On Reading Well ¹¹*

Character Study Tips!

A helpful way to dig more deeply into a character study is to choose a lens through which to study your character. For this study, take the time to look at how Elijah endures hardship (pain, suffering, wrongdoing, and injustice). If it helps, use the chart below:

	<i>How does Elijah react to:</i>	<i>How does God respond to Elijah's reactions?</i>	<i>Other cross-references that give you further insight:</i>
SUFFERING	Hint: 1 Kings 17:2-9		Hint: Romans 5:1-5
PAIN	Hint: 1 Kings 17:22-24		Hint: Matthew 26:38-39
WRONGDOING	Hint: 1 Kings 18:38-39		Hint: Romans 5:6-8
INJUSTICE	Hint: 1 Kings 19:5-18		Hint: Matthew 5:38-48

Study Guide: Applying Old Testament Narratives¹²

Keep the following 5 guidelines in mind when you try to apply Old Testament narratives to yourself!

1

What people do in narratives is not necessarily a good example to us. Frequently it is just the opposite.

2

Most of the characters in the narratives are far from perfect, and so are their actions. This is true of obvious sinners like Ahab and even great men like Elijah. Thus, we should not try to copy everything even Elijah does. We should let the rest of Scripture, especially the New Testament guide us in drawing lessons for application.

3

We are not always told at the end of a narrative whether what happened was good or bad. We are expected to be able to decide that on the basis of what God has said directly elsewhere in Scripture. (Thus, the importance of cross-references!)

4

In every case, God is speaking to and dealing with a particular person. We should not think we are supposed to do everything He tells someone in the narrative to do. Instead of looking for tactics to copy, we should focus on God's character, His aims, and the variety of His methods. We should pray for discernment from the Holy Spirit and un-coerced confirmation from other Christians before we apply a specific command (such as wait, go forward, or make peace) to ourselves.

5

If God's Word illustrates a principle that the New Testament would uphold, then we can apply the principle to genuinely comparable situations in our own lives. Our task is to discern the principle accurately and make sure that our situations are truly comparable. This is not always easy, and it always requires wisdom from the Holy Spirit and guidance from the New Testament. Discussion with other discerning Christians also helps guard against error .



Dig Deeper

Notes

1 Throughout the Bible, when suffering is mentioned, patience almost always accompanies it. **Take time to study** the Biblical virtue of patience (or longsuffering). *Why is patience a key component to suffering? What does patience have to do with abiding in hardship?*

2 At the heart of Elijah's discouragement in 1 Kings 19 is a sense of being completely alone. *Why does he feel this way?*

How does God respond to him?

Consider this quote by Mother Theresa: "The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love. There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread but there are many more dying for a little love. The poverty in the West is a different kind of poverty -- it is not only a poverty of loneliness but also of spirituality. There's a hunger for love, as there is a hunger for God." ¹³ *Do you agree or disagree? Why?*

Why is community essential to abiding in Christ, especially in times of hardship or discouragement? (Look for other places in the Bible where community is essential!)

Who is your "Elisha"?

3 The name "Jezebel" has become synonymous with "wicked woman." **Take time to study** this strong leader. Be sure to **compare** her to other strong women who actively participated in politics and religion in the Bible - women like Miriam, Deborah, Abigail, Jehosheba, Esther, Anna, Lydia, and Priscilla. *Why does the Bible condemn Jezebel so harshly? (Consider 1 Kings 16:31; 18:4, 19; 19:1-2; 21:4-16, 25; Revelations 2:20.)*

4 In the *On Reading Well* quote above, Prior argues that patience allows us to have a correct understanding of this fallen world, but only if we also have a correct understanding of God's character and sovereignty. *What is your understanding of God's character and sovereignty?*

EIGHTH WEEK

*Abiding While Going
(Answering Our Calling)*

*Topical Study
2 Timothy 1:8-9*

ANCHOR QUESTION

Is abiding our calling or does abiding equip us for our calling?

TRY IT! Topical Study

We suggest starting a topical study in 1 of 3 ways:

- 1. If you're starting your topical study with a key word or idea, begin with a word study on that word or idea. (HINT: Look at Dig Deeper #1.)*
- 2. If you're starting your topical study with a verse or a phrase, put that verse or phrase in its context. (HINT: Look at Dig Deeper #2.)*
- 3. Or, regardless of whether you're starting with a key word, idea, verse, or phrase, think through characters in the Bible who serve as positive OR negative examples. (HINT: Look at Dig Deeper #3.)*

NEW TOOL Topical Study

Essentially, a topical study simply means choosing a topic and then searching the whole Bible to learn more! There's no wrong way to do it. Just make sure you start in prayer! If you've never done a topical study before, start with the TRY IT! section to the right.



Dig Deeper

1 There are three main Greek words used for calling in the New Testament. Take time to **do word studies** on each of these words.

Kaleo (start: 2 Timothy 1:9 [first "call"]; Romans 9:25)

Klesis (start: 2 Timothy 1:9 [second "call" in ESV/NASB; "holy life" in NIV]; Hebrews 3:1)

Kletos (start: Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2)

What do they reveal about calling?

Are there different types of calling?

2 Take time to **examine** the beginning of each of Paul's letters (Romans – Philemon). You'll note that over and over again, Paul connects his calling to his identity. **Consider:** *How would you explain your identity in Christ? (Do you really believe it?)*

How does your understanding of your identity in Christ impact the way you see God?

How does your understanding of your identity in Christ impact the way you see calling?

3 There are several people in the Bible who have received their callings in rather spectacular ways: Moses, Gideon, Samuel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Paul, to name a few. **Take time to study** one or more of these stories. (Suggested references to the right.) As you study these stories, **ask yourself:**

How does God call them? (Are there any patterns in how He calls people?)

To what does He call them? (Patterns?)

How do they respond? (Patterns?)

What is our responsibility if we never receive a calling like they did?

The Callings of Biblical Character

Genesis 12:1-8

Exodus 3:1-4:18

Deuteronomy 31:23, 34:9,

Joshua 1

Judges 6:11-7:25

1 Samuel 3

1 Samuel 16:1-13

1 Kings 19

Nehemiah 1

Jeremiah 1

Ezekiel 1-3 (or 7)

Esther 4

Luke 5:1-11

Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:4-8

Acts 9:1-31

2 Timothy 2:2

NINTH WEEK

What did you learn in Bible
study this summer?



What did you learn about abiding?

EACH WEEK:

Write a key word:

01
02
03
04
05
06
07
08

Key Verses

Key Points from the Study

Key Applications

ABIDING LOOKS LIKE:

ABIDING DOESN'T LOOK LIKE:

MOST CHALLENGED BY:

WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT GOD:

MAIN LESSON LEARNED THIS SUMMER:

WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT MY IDENTITY IN CHRIST:

MEMORABLE GOD MOMENTS:

Music listened to:

Places studied at:

People studied with:

FAVORITE BIBLE STUDY:

Impactful Verses/Quotes:

PRAYERS ANSWERED:

Citations

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